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Recommended Citation

Office of University Communications, "The B.E.S.T. Opportunity" (2011). *Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive*. 2043.

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The B.E.S.T. Opportunity

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Office of University Communications

August 17, 2011

Local Students Put Entrepreneurship into Practice



BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – If there's any truth in the maxim, "Practice makes perfect," then 43 area high school students recently took a step toward entrepreneurial perfection at the Gardner-Webb Godbold School of Business's sixth annual B.E.S.T. Program, sponsored by the Cleveland County Board of Commissioners.

The program, which stands for "Bringing Executives and Students Together," enabled some of the area's most successful and conscientious leaders to help the students put business and civic leadership principles into practice. "The high schools are doing such a great job teaching these kids about business," said Dr. Anthony Negbenebor, dean of Gardner-Webb's Godbold School of Business. "We hope we're adding to that value by taking those principles outside the classroom and teaching them to apply what they know. We also focus on topics like personal finance, ways to study, the value of education, and even how to prepare for the job market."

Students from Burns, Shelby, Kings Mountain, and Crest High Schools, and Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy, attended this year's program. For three days, they learned about everything from editing a newspaper to making sound financial investments, and even how to prepare for college and job interviews. They also participated in three hands-on business projects.

"One of the projects is called 'Trash to Treasure,' and it challenges students to find a piece of trash at home that they can sell as a product, and then figure out their own marketing strategies for convincing consumers to purchase it. We also have them design their own newspaper cover pages using 'The Shelby Star' model. Finally, we have them work in teams to sell lemonade and tea," said Jenn Hindman, GWU sophomore and vice president of the Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) club, one of the program sponsors.

"The lemonade project is exciting," added Natetsa Lawrence, "because they have to name their business, market their product, and make the sale. They have a CEO, a VP of Marketing, a VP of human resources, and a VP of production on each team. It's just a great inside look at what running a business is all about."

Several of the Cleveland County Commissioners, the program's key sponsors, even led the students through a mock commissioners meeting, teaching them the value of public service. "The County is invested in this program because these students are tomorrow's leaders."

They will take us either forward or backward, and we want to do everything in our power to make sure the future is one of progress,” said Cleveland County Commissioner Mary Accor.

But the most convincing statement of the value of the B.E.S.T. program came from the students themselves. Joey Runyon, a rising junior at Crest High and an aspiring sports management leader, noted the value of learning teamwork and competition. “I’ve never really done anything like this before. It’s cool how, even though we’ve never really met each other, we can work together to figure out what we’re going to do, and have a basic plan in place within an hour and a half of meeting one another.”

Chozie Hunt, a rising junior at Shelby High and a second-year B.E.S.T. participant, echoed Runyon’s emphasis on teamwork. “It’s good to meet new people, and to learn to use our social skills as marketing skills. It’s been especially helpful for me because I want to own my own business.

The Godbold School of Business would like to thank the following speakers for sharing their expertise with this year’s B.E.S.T. participants: Mary S. Accor, Cleveland County Commissioner; Megan Ward, Editor, “The Shelby Star”; Jason Falls, Cleveland County Commissioner; Eddie Bailes, Assistant County Manager; Donna Huie-Brooks, TV33; Alexis Pearson, Cleveland County HR Director; Rev. Frances Webber, Washington Missionary Baptist Church; Barbara Mull, Edward Jones Investment; Dr. Donald Caudill, GWU Professor of Marketing; Oscar Zamora, GWU Instructor in Business Administration and Management; Ron Dickerson, GWU Head Football Coach; and Nakia James, Area Technician at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development.

The School of Business also thanks the following sponsors for the B.E.S.T. program: Cleveland County Board of Commissioners; Chick-Fil-A; SIFE; Barbara Mull, Edward Jones Investment; Cleveland County Schools; Cleveland Regional Medical Center; “The Shelby Star”; Burger King; Hardees; and Westmoreland Printers.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University was founded in 1905 and is home to over 4,300 students from 37 states and 21 foreign countries.